

FRANKFORT, KY. - (March 1, 2010) Governor Steve Beshear has signed a proclamation declaring March Severe Storms Awareness Month across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM), the Kentucky Weather Preparedness Committee (KWPC), along with the National Weather Service (NWS) offices that serve the state of Kentucky, have designated this month as a time for severe weather awareness and preparedness.

"Kentuckians are very resourceful and have a great track record of taking care of themselves and others in a time of crisis, but we can always be better prepared," said Gov. Beshear. "We are entering a critical time of the year for storm systems, so it is important that we heighten our awareness and prepare for bad weather before it occurs. Severe Storms Awareness Month is the perfect time to review your family's emergency preparedness plan."

As a part of severe storms awareness activities, schools, businesses and citizens are encouraged to conduct a tornado safety drill.

On February 25, the Federal Communications Commission granted a waiver for the use of a "live" Tornado Warning code for Kentucky's statewide Tornado Drill on the Emergency Alert System (EAS), scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at 10:07 a.m. EDT / 9:07 a.m. CDT.

The waiver allows commercial broadcasters serving the Commonwealth of Kentucky to relay the National Weather Service's Tornado Warning drill with the same codes that would be used for a real tornado occurrence.

"This is great news", said Chris Allen, chairman of the Kentucky Weather Preparedness Committee. "The only way to effectively test the EAS, as well as the thousands of weather radios that are in homes, schools and businesses in the state, is to conduct the drill using the 'hot' code."

"Protecting the lives and property of every citizen is top priority," said John Heltzel, director of KYEM. "We can't prevent severe storms from happening, but we can be prepared for when they do." Heltzel continued, "People are working toward this goal all over the state...from emergency management to specific groups such as the Kentucky Weather Preparedness Committee and the National Weather Service, to help ensure Kentuckians are informed and prepared for severe weather." He concluded by adding, "I encourage you to protect your family. Awareness starts at home: BE AWARE - BE PREPARED - HAVE A PLAN!"

The statewide Tornado Drill is part of the Kentucky's Severe Storms Awareness Month. Additional information about the severe weather campaign, including preparedness and safety information, can be found at www.kyem.ky.gov and www.weather.gov.

The Kentucky Division of Emergency Management and Kentucky Weather Preparedness Committee urge you and your family to review these safety tips as we enter the peak severe weather season in Kentucky:

Flash Flooding Safety Rules

According to statistics from the National Weather Service; flash floods and floods are the most recent year's #1 storm-related killer in Kentucky and across the United States.

- If Driving, DO NOT DRIVE THROUGH FLOODED AREAS, even if it looks shallow enough to cross. The majority of deaths caused by flooding are due to people driving through flooded areas. Water only one foot deep can displace 1,500 pounds. Two feet of water can easily carry most vehicles. Roadways concealed by floodwaters may not be intact.
- If caught outside, immediately go to higher ground! Avoid small rivers or streams, low spots, culverts or ravines. Do not try to walk through flowing water more than ankle deep, as it only takes six inches of water to knock you off your feet. Do not allow children to play around streams, drainage ditches or viaducts, storm drains or other flooded areas.
- If ordered to evacuate or if rising water is threatening, leave immediately and get to higher ground.

Lightning Safety Rules

Lightning is the number two storm-related killer. In Kentucky, more people are killed by lightning in an average year than tornadoes. Although severe thunderstorm warnings are NOT issued for lightning, you should move to shelter when thunder is heard as lightning can strike 10 to 15 miles away from where the rain is falling.

- If outside, immediately go to a safe shelter, such as inside a sturdy building. A hardtop automobile with the windows up can also offer fair protection.
- If you are boating or swimming, immediately get out of the water and move to a safe shelter away from the water!
- If you are in a wooded area, seek shelter under a thick growth of relatively small trees.
- If you feel your hair standing on end, squat with your head between your knees. Do not lie flat!
- Avoid isolated trees or other tall objects, bodies of water, sheds, fences, convertible automobiles, tractors and motorcycles.
- If inside, avoid using the telephone (except for emergencies) or other electrical appliances.
- Do not take a bath or shower during a thunderstorm.

Tornado/Severe Thunderstorm Safety Rules

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outdoors.
- Stay away from windows.
- Get out of automobiles.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car; instead, leave it immediately for safe shelter. Do not seek shelter in an underpass.
- If caught outside or in a vehicle, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands.
- Be aware of flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes and high winds causes most fatalities and injuries.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes or high winds. You should leave a mobile home and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy building or storm shelter.

For more information and additional safety tips, please contact your local Emergency Management Director or visit:

www.kyem.ky.gov

www.fema.gov

www.weather.gov